

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KADUNA 1102

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PDEV, NI
SUBJECT: SHARIA AND POLITICAL MANEUVERING

REF: KADUNA 1077

1. AFTER TWO MONTHS IN THE NORTH I HAD BEGUN TO RE-EVALUATE OUR EARLIER ASSUMPTION IN LAGOS CONCERNING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE SHARIA DEFEAT FOR THE NORTH. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT IT REPRESENTED A SIGNIFICANT DEFEAT FOR THE NORTHERN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA) MEMBERS; HOWEVER, IT APPEARED FROM OUR CONTACTS HERE TO HAVE BECOME A VICTORY FOR THE TRADITIONAL ESTABLISHMENT. AS REPORTED EARLIER IN THE NORTHERN CA MEMBERS WERE GENERALLY YOUNGER POLITICIANS AND HAD CHOSEN TO WIN THEIR SEATS WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT--APPARENTLY AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK WITH THE PAST. IN THE ESTABLISHMENT'S VIEW THE "NEW BREED" FOUND THEMSELVES OUTGUNNED AND OUTMANEUVERED IN THE CA BY THE "OLD BOYS" FROM THE SOUTH (AND OF COURSE THE YOUNG MIDDLE BELTERS). AFTER DEFEAT THEY TURNED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT TO LEAD THE NORTH IN FUTURE POLITICAL BATTLES. ACCORDING TO WHAT WE HAVE HEARD THE ESTABLISHMENT IN TURN DECIDED TO LIVE WITH SHARIA AS IT STANDS
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AND FIGHT THE BATTLE AGAIN UNDER THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT.

2. THEREFORE, THE ANNOUNCEMENTS ON AUGUST 7 AND 11 THAT THE KANO CA DELEGATION AND 4 MEMBERS OF THE NIGER DELEGATION WANTED THE CA REOPENED AND THE SHARIA ISSUE RECONSIDERED (REFTEL) APPEARS TO GO AGAINST WHAT WE UNDERSTAND AS THE ESTABLISHMENT LINE. AS EMBASSY IS

AWARE FOUR CA MEMBERS FROM BAUCHI JUMPED ON THIS PARTICULAR BANDWAGON AS REPORTED BY THE NEW NIGERIAN AUGUST 16. WE ARE INCLINED TO ASSUME THAT THE ALLIANCE OF THE NEW AND OLD POLITICANS HAS DEVELOPED A SIGNIFICANT CRACK. HOWEVER, WE NOTE THAT THE ISSUE OF RECONVENING THE CA REMAINED QUIET FOR THE LAST FEW DAYS SINCE THIS INITIAL SPATE OF PUBLICITY. (DESPITE THE HEADLINE IN AUGUST 21 NEW NIGERIAN, "SHARIA ADVOCATES WILL STICK TO THEIR GUNS", WE NOTE AMINU KANO'S REPORTED REMARKS THAT SHARIA ADVOCATES "WOULD NOT GIVE UP THE STRUGGLE" APPEAR TO BE IN LINE WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT POSITION.) WE SUSPECT THIS IS THE RESULT OF HIGH LEVEL POLITICKING BY OBASANJO AND THE TRADITIONAL RULERS.

3. I WAS IN SOKOTO LAST WEEK AND LEFT THE MORNING OF AUGUST 17, THE DAY OBASANJO VISITED SOKOTO TO LAUNCH THE ARID ZONE AFFORESTRATION PROGRAM. OBASANJO'S TRIP HAD BEEN PLANNED FOR AT LEAST ONE WEEK ACCORDING TO THE SOKOTO CHIEF OF PROTOCOL. AT THE LAST MINUTE EIGHT OF THE SENIOR TRADITIONAL RULERS IN THE NORTH (INCLUDING THE SHEHU OF BORNO AND EMIRS OF KANO, KATSINA AND ZAIRA) REPORTEDLY DECIDED TO ATTEND THIS CEREMONY AT THE SULTAN'S INVITATION. THE STATE GOVERNMENT WAS INFORMED OF THE SHEHU/EMIR'S VISIT MID-MORNING AUGUST 16 AND AT THE SULTAN'S REQUEST REORGANIZED OBASANJO'S PROGRAM TO ACCOMMODATE THEM--
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PRESUMABLY TO ARRANGE A MEETING BETWEEN OBASANJO AND THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS. STRANGELY, THE NEWSPAPERS, WHICH USUALLY REPORT THE PUBLIC ACTIVITIES OF SUCH IMPORTANT TRADITIONAL LEADERS, DID NOT MENTION THEIR ATTENDANCE AND SIMPLY NOTED OBASANJO CALLED ON THE SULTAN. WE SUSPECT THERE WAS A MEETING DEALING WITH THE REEMERGENCE OF THE SHARIA ISSUE AND THE WORD MAY BE OUT TO QUIET THE YOUNG TURKS. FURTHER SUPPORTING THIS THEORY WAS THE PRESENCE OF M.D. YUSUF, INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF POLICE. HIS POSITION HAS NO OBVIOUS CONNECTION WITH THE AFFORESTRATION PROGRAM, BUT HE WAS THE SMC MEMBER SENT TO THE NORTH AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SHARIA CRISIS LAST SPRING TO MEET WITH THE SULTAN AND OTHER KEY PEOPLE AND HE ALSO MADE A PERSONAL APPEAL TO CA MEMBERS DURING THE CRISIS. AN OBVIOUS MAN TO PARTICIPATE IN A POLITICAL MEETING OF THIS NATURE.

4. IF THE NORTHERN CA MEMBERS ACCEPT SHARIA AS IT APPEARS IN THE CONSTITUTION, WE BELIEVE OBASANJO AND THE ESTABLISHMENT WILL HAVE WON THIS ROUND. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT THE ISSUE REAPPEARED AGAIN

SUGGESTS THAT NORTHERN UNITY IS WEAKER THAN WE HAD
BEGUN TO ASSUME. IF THE SHARIA ISSUE CONTINUES TO
BUBBLE THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF KANO, NIGER AND
BAUCHI CA MEMBERS, THEN WE BELIEVE THE FMG AND THE
NORTHERN ESTABLISHMENT BOTH HAVE MAJOR
PROBLEMS AHEAD IN THE TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN RULE.
LAKE

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